United Nations S/PV.4295

Security Council

Fifty-sixth year

Provisional

4295th meeting

Thursday, 15 March 2001, 12.05 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Yel'chenko	(Ukraine)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Ahsan
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Mali	Mr. Issouf Oumar Maiga
	Mauritius	Mr. Latona
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Singapore	Ms. Lee
	Tunisia	Mr. Ben Mustapha
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

> **Letter dated 13 March 2001 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2001/216).**

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

01-28797 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 12.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

Letter dated 13 March 2001 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2001/216)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Algeria, Bahrain, Belgium, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, the Sudan, Sweden, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Lancry (Israel) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Baali (Algeria), Mr. Buallay (Bahrain), Mr. Adam (Belgium), Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt), Mr. Al-Douri (Iraq), Mr. Ahmadi (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. Akasaka (Japan), Mr. Al-Hadidi (Jordan), Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait), Mr. Dorda (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia), Mr. Hughes (New Zealand), Mr. Khalid (Pakistan), Mr. Al-Sulaiti (Qatar), Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia), Mr. Kumalo (South Africa), Mr. Erwa (Sudan), Mr. Schori (Sweden), Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic), Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) and Mr. Al-Ashtal (Yemen) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 15 March 2001 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2001/225, and which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting of the Security Council to be held today, Thursday, 15 March 2001, regarding the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the current debate in accordance with the rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 14 March 2001 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which reads as follows:

> "In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I have the honour to request that I be invited to participate in the debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, under rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council."

On previous occasions, the Security Council has extended invitations to representatives of other United Nations bodies in connection with the consideration of matters on its agenda. In accordance with past practice in this matter, I propose that the Council extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in response to the request contained in a letter dated 13 March 2001 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the

United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, document S/2001/216.

I should also like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2001/209, which contains the text of a letter dated 9 March 2001 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

Members of the Council have received photocopies of a letter date 12 March 2001 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, which will be issued as a document of the Council under the symbol S/2001/227.

The first speaker inscribed on my list is the Permanent Observer of Palestine, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to start by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We express our pleasure at seeing you once again at the helm of the Permanent Mission of Ukraine, a very friendly country.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Tunisia and to the Tunisian delegation for the work they carried out last month. They represent a sisterly Arab country, which hosted the Palestine Liberation Organization and Palestinian military cadres for quite some time.

Before I begin reading my official statement to the Council today, perhaps it would be appropriate that I inform the Council of the latest developments in the situation in our occupied territories. Allow me to read out in English this article from Reuters.

(*spoke in English*)

> "At least six Palestinian children were burned when Israeli border police threw a stun grenade into the courtyard of a school in the West Bank city of Hebron on Thursday. Witnesses said some of the children, aged about 10 to 13, screamed as they were carried out of the school into ambulances. At least one child's head was wrapped in a bandage. But doctors described the casualties' burns as moderate to light. The army, which was looking into the report, gave no immediate explanation of the incident."

(*spoke in Arabic*)

I will now go back to my official statement.

The Council is meeting today at the request of Palestine and of the Arab Group. It is the fourth time that the Council has held a public and official meeting to discuss the very dangerous situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, since the visit by Mr. Ariel Sharon, who was elected Prime Minister of Israel, to Al-Haram Al-Sharif last September and the ensuing bloodletting campaign by the Israeli military against the Palestinian people.

During that period, the Security Council adopted resolution 1322 (2000) on 7 October last. The international community and all of us fervently hoped that it would stop Israel, the occupying force, from continuing its campaign against our people and its excessive use of force, that it would restore the situation to what it was before 28 September and that it bring a continuation of the peace process and negotiations between the two parties on the final settlement. Very regrettably, this has not happened.

Israel has escalated its campaign against our people, in complete violation of the provisions of the resolution. In view of this, there was an urgent need for the international community to provide protection to Palestinian civilians who live under Israeli occupation. And the idea crystallized that the United Nations would send an observer force into the territories occupied by Israel since 1967.

The countries of the Non-Aligned Movement in the Council prepared a draft resolution in this context. They used all the ideas put forth by other members to reach acceptable formulas in this respect. They submitted the draft resolution for a vote on 18 December. Regrettably, that draft resolution was not adopted because it could not command the necessary nine votes, in spite of statements by some abstaining members that they had no substantive differences with the draft. This was very a regrettable failure by the Security Council, from our point of view. It may have sent the wrong message to Israel, the occupying force. Since that day, 18 December, the occupation forces have killed more than 80 Palestinian martyrs and have wounded several thousand.

We believe that it would have been possible to save at least some of those people had the Council sent a different message. We say this so that we can make perfectly clear the context in which we are calling on the Council to move in the implementation of its duties under the Charter. Of course, this is in addition to the risks that the current situation in the Palestinian territories might pose for the peace process and for the Middle East as a whole.

During the same period, our Observer Mission sent 30 letters to the President of the Security Council and identical letters to the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly, in which we explained developments in the Israeli practices and the Israeli campaign. Our Mission gave several specific examples, as well as the names of Palestinian martyrs, including children under 18 years of age. We sent 30 letters in which we documented everything that was done by Israel. Our file that could be described as the "file of crimes", including measures that represent a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 1949 and that clearly constitute war crimes in the terms of that Convention.

In these letters we described the Israeli actions under the military bloodletting campaign as follows: deliberate killing, even in circumstances where the safety of the occupation forces were not jeopardized; the wounding of many victims — shooting at the upper limbs and upper parts of the body; the targeting of people by sharpshooters and by other means, using types of ammunition unknown to us; the use of tanks, helicopters and other heavy weapons to shell the Palestinian Authority headquarters and other civilian targets; restrictions on the movement of individuals and goods in Palestinian territory and between the Palestinian territory and the outside world; collective punishment, such as an almost continual curfew on the population of Hebron and the destruction of agriculture, land and other economic installations; and the non-transfer of taxes collected for the Palestinian Authority.

This tragic situation was also described by other international organizations and human rights organizations, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs. Mary Robinson, and the committee delegated by the Commission on Human Rights to investigate the situation. In spite of the clarity of this bleak picture, Israel has not stopped making claims of Palestinian violence. The cause of this situation is the Israeli occupation and the measures taken by the occupying forces, which continued even after the start of the peace process, such as the confiscation of territory and the building of settlements. Since 28 September, other measures have included the presence of the Israeli occupation army and the use of its huge military machinery; the presence of the illegal occupiers and settlers and their use of weapons against our people; the deliberate destruction of the Palestinian economy; and the transforming of the lives of the Palestinian people into a veritable hell.

Of course, there is a complete popular Palestinian rejection of all of this. Here we have to say that in the face of all these Israeli policies and measures, some limited elements have accepted the use of reciprocal violence. However, this cannot at all change the clear and definitive nature of the situation.

Let us take another look at the numbers: the huge number of Palestinian casualties and the limited Israeli casualties, for which we also express our regret. But the difference is huge and beyond comparison. In addition, there is no Israeli civilian presence within the occupied Palestinian territory; there are the members of the occupation army and settlers who reside there illegally, in violation of international law. The question here is how can any party, at least in view of these facts, talk about Palestinian violence, except those who believe that the Israeli human casualties are different qualitatively from the Palestinian human casualties? But this would represent such a racist situation that we would not even be able to begin to deal with it.

Why does Israel, the occupation force, do all of this? We are not really sure, after all this time and all this suffering. Perhaps the Israeli army or some of its elements are completely out of control — some refer in particular to the Chief of Staff, Mr. Mofaz, as one example of this. Perhaps the Israeli political leadership would like to break Palestinian political will and impose certain solutions on the Palestinian side. Perhaps it is even worse — perhaps the political leadership has concluded that it could not implement the agreements undertaken in the peace process, including the implementation of Security Council resolution 242 (1967). It may wish to exit the peace process and to throw the blame on the Palestinian side. Perhaps it is a combination of all these factors.

The important thing here, regardless of reasons and motives, is that we stop this tragedy as soon as possible. In this respect, we must refer to the responsibility of the international community, particularly that of the Security Council. Stopping the serious and dangerous deterioration is the necessary prelude to restoring the situation to the way it was before 28 September, saving the peace process and resuming the negotiations between the two sides.

This brings me to the situation of the peace process, both before and after the installation of the new Israeli cabinet. The Israeli party claims that the previous Government made unprecedented concessions, which the Palestinian side rejected. This tells only half the story and in a very evasive and deceptive way paints a different picture. The previous Israeli Government may have adopted positions that were unprecedented by any adopted by earlier Israeli Governments, but that is not the question. The question is the Israeli positions of the past, particularly if they were unreasonable and contrary to international law and legitimacy. The standard that should be used is consonance with the peace process, which includes implementation of Security Council 242 (1967) and the principle of land for peace. That is the yardstick.

Here, I say very clearly that the previous Government did not adopt positions consonant with the peace process or with the implementation of agreements, although these positions were progressive relative to those of previous Governments. That is what prevented us from reaching an agreement at the Camp David summit.

Let me say here that the Palestinian side has accepted, with some reservations, the principles that were later declared by former United States President Clinton. This indicates our commitment to the bases of the peace process and that we are ready to negotiate on the basis of those principles. In the wake of the summit, the two parties achieved reasonable progress in the Taba talks. It would have been possible to achieve further progress had it not been for the known and constant of Mr. Barak up to the very last moment.

As for the current Israeli Government, its positions completely contradict the bases of the peace process and the agreements concluded between the two parties. This Government, through the head of its cabinet in particular, claims that it cannot negotiate while the violence continues, as if the Palestinian side were responsible for the occupation and the practices of the Israeli army, the settlers and the campaign against our people. It acts as if we can isolate the situation on the ground from the political situation and the future of an entire people.

The Israeli Government also refuses to negotiate from the point that was reached by the two sides in Taba. In other words, it would want to take us back a very long way. Much more serious than that, however — and here we are talking about the essence of that Government's position — is its reluctance to negotiate a final settlement in favour of new interim arrangements and solutions. This clearly indicates its desire to dissociate itself from the implementation of resolution 242 (1967). It would like to impose an eternal interim stage on the Palestinian people following the five interim years and their extension. This, of course, destroys the basis of the peace process and the agreements concluded between the two sides.

Yesterday, Mr. Shimon Peres, the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs, met here with the Security Council. That was good. Mr. Peres is a veteran politician known to be reasonably moderate. The problem is that he represents a Government that does not reflect that reasonable moderation. The question is whether Mr. Peres and his colleagues can influence the policies of that Government or whether the Government will use them as a cover for its extremist policies. So far, the omens are bad. Mr. Peres laid out the position of Mr. Sharon as we already know it with respect to the current situation, his refusal to accept a United Nations observer mission and even the future of the peace process, not to mention the other news and indications to be inferred from the escalating measures adopted by the Government in imposing a suffocating blockade against the Palestinian people.

These positions impose clear responsibilities on the international community, in particular the two sponsors of the peace process and, specifically, the United States, which was a party to the current agreements.

We all bear the responsibility to maintain and support the peace process by preserving its agreed bases and by insisting on a commitment to concluded agreements. On our part, we reaffirm our commitment to all of this, to our strategic choice of peace and to our readiness immediately to resume negotiations on a final settlement.

We call on the Israeli side immediately to halt the bloody military campaign against our people and to resume negotiations on a final settlement, taking into account the progress made to date in the negotiations. We call on the international community, and the Security Council in particular, to take the necessary steps to help the two sides to surmount the current situation, to put an end to the current tragedy and to restore control as a prelude to the resuscitation of the peace process, as I have mentioned before, through practical measures, including the establishment of an observer force.

We dearly hope that the Security Council will play that role this time and will contribute to improving the situation so as to achieve lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East as a whole.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Israel, on whom I now call.

Mr. Lancry (Israel): Mr. President, at the outset, I wish to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council, and I wish you much success in this capacity. I wish also to thank your predecessor, the Ambassador of Tunisia, for his most able leadership.

Yesterday, the Council heard a statement by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel, Mr. Shimon Peres. I believe that Minister Peres clearly described the position of the Israeli Government on all issues pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and specifically to the deliberations at hand, those regarding an international presence in the territories. I wish to thank the members of the Council for yesterday's constructive dialogue and for their obvious concern for peace and security for all the peoples of the region.

Mr. Peres articulated a vision of cooperation and coexistence between Israel and the Palestinians, one in which economic cooperation has transcended territorial conflict and facilitated its resolution. He spoke of the primary importance that the new Israeli Government attaches to the pursuit of peace. Indeed, he observed that the current crisis in the peace process is not exclusively territorial, but emotional as well. Though I do not wish to be redundant, I do wish to add my voice to Mr. Peres' voice in cautioning the Council, at this extremely sensitive time, when tensions and emotions are running high, not to add a new, complicating factor to an already difficult situation.

At this point, I should like to recall a statement made by that late, great statesman, French President François Mitterrand, commenting, in a context that was not totally similar, on the need to enhance international intervention during the Bosnian conflict. He said, "Let us not add war to war".

Today's meeting comes as no surprise to us. The recent actions of the Palestinians, including pronouncements in the media and documents circulated by the Permanent Observer of Palestine — my colleague, Ambassador Nasser Al-Kidwa — have made no secret of the fact that the Palestinians wish to see the Security Council intervene in this matter. This initiative was prepared weeks ago and has been undertaken without even giving the new Israeli Government a chance to reassess the situation.

Thus, we believe that the initiative under discussion today is part of a larger strategy. The Palestinians often speak — as my dear colleague, Ambassador Al-Kidwa, just did — of their strategic choice for peace. This, we believe, is a genuine Palestinian aspiration. Where we part ways, however, is in how we seek to achieve such a peace. Do we wish to make peace through dialogue and negotiation, or through violence and terror?

A prominent European statesman put it this way: one cannot search for peace with a pen in one hand and a bomb in the other. Now the Palestinians want a pen in one hand, a bomb in the other, and an international shield in between.

The Palestinian intifada, as it has existed for nearly six months now, is incompatible with international protection. Not once, in a confrontation that is almost half a year old, has Chairman Arafat, as the leader of the Palestinians, called for an end to the violence. Are the Palestinians, by asking for an international protection force, now implying a renunciation of violence?

The situation as it exists in the Palestinian territories today is not one of a threatened people who are in dire need of protection. Indeed, the only thing the Palestinians need protection from is the consequences of their own actions.

Since the last time the Council met to discuss this issue, it has become widely acknowledged that the responsibility for the violence lies with the Palestinians. This has been Israel's contention all

along, but developments in recent months have made this truth incontrovertible. I should like to mention just a few brief points that serve to illustrate this assertion.

First, it is important to ask, as did Cicero in ancient Rome, "*Qui bono*?" Who is benefiting? Without question, the Palestinians have benefited tremendously from the international attention that they have attracted. Since September, the international media have trained their lenses squarely on the Palestinians, and the Palestinians themselves have been enormously successful at manipulating that attention to their maximum advantage. Yesterday, Minister Peres described an intercepted message in which Palestinians were instructed not to begin throwing stones until CNN reporters, who were caught in traffic, could arrive on the scene.

Secondly, despite Chairman Arafat's commitments to control terror and violence, as enshrined in his letter to Prime Minister Rabin of 9 September 1993, and despite the understanding reached at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit in October, Chairman Arafat has still not called upon his people to stop the intifada. Just this week, Chairman Arafat had such an opportunity when he spoke to the Palestinian Legislative Council in Gaza City, an address that was carried on Palestinian radio. Had Chairman Arafat issued such a call — as he had previously agreed — it would have been an important first step towards the immediate relief of the suffering of the Palestinian people and would have made today's meeting completely unnecessary. His failure to issue such a call is a strong indication that the Chairman does not really wish to see the violence brought to a close.

Thirdly, the Palestinian leadership has, over the course of the past few months, consistently acted to encourage rather than to quell the confrontations. In this regard, I must recall the continuing incitement to violence on television, on the radio, in newspapers and in the mosques, as well as the release of convicted terrorist prisoners from Palestinian Authority prisons — an action that directly contributed to the recent rise in terrorist attacks inside Israel. Besides being a blatant violation of signed agreements with Israel, these actions clearly demonstrate the central role of the Palestinian leadership in perpetuating the conflict, and they make it impossible to pursue a dialogue with our Palestinian partners under the current conditions.

Fourthly, there are the statements of Palestinian officials themselves, who have admitted to the fact that the Palestinian leadership made active preparations for the outbreak of the hostilities as early as last July. The Palestinian daily newspaper *Al-Ayyam*, on 6 December 2000, quoted Imad Al-Falouji, the Palestinian Minister of Communications, as saying that the Palestinian Authority had begun preparations for the outbreak of the current intifada from the moment the Camp David talks concluded, in accordance with instructions given by Chairman Arafat himself. Mr. Al-Falouji went on to state that Mr. Arafat launched this intifada as the culminating stage of "Palestinian steadfastness" in the negotiations, according to *Al-Ayyam*, 6 December 2000. More recently, Mr. Falouji reiterated the involvement of the Palestinian leadership in orchestrating the violence in a statement quoted by Reuters on 4 March 2001.

The Oslo peace process was based on the fundamental commitment of the Palestinian leadership to renounce the use of violence and terrorism and to settle all outstanding claims through peaceful bilateral negotiations. This commitment was expressly stated in the letter of Chairman Arafat to the late Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin, on 9 September 1993. In the letter Mr. Arafat stated,

> "The PLO recognizes the right of the State of Israel to exist in peace and security ... The PLO commits itself to the Middle East peace process and to a peaceful resolution of the conflict between the two sides and declares that all outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations. The PLO renounces the use of terrorism and other acts of violence and will assume responsibility over all PLO elements and personnel in order to assure their compliance, prevent violations and discipline violators."

It was only in response to these cardinal undertakings that the Government of Israel recognized the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and agreed to formally negotiate with it in the context of the Middle East peace process.

These letters of mutual recognition, to which we have so often referred in past statements before the Council, and which were exchanged just prior to the signing of the Declaration of Principles in September 1993, constitute the underlying basis of the Israeli-

Palestinian peace process and of all subsequent agreements concluded between the parties. As such, any violation of the commitments contained in these letters undermines the very foundation of the peace process and imperils the achievement of its noble objectives.

The new Israeli Government, under the leadership of Ariel Sharon, wants nothing more than to achieve a just and lasting peace settlement with the Palestinians. The Government has frozen settlement construction and has decided against any acts of collective punishment, not because it was forced to do so, but out of a real and genuine desire for peace. As Minister Peres said yesterday, peace is the chief objective of the present Government. To that end, we must quickly resume negotiations, though in an atmosphere of calm and tranquillity, not through a vicious cycle of violence.

The current Palestinian initiative requests that the Council send a mission of international observers to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This is an initiative that is completely unnecessary.

Chairman Arafat has the ability to protect the lives of his people himself. All he needs to do, and indeed all we are asking of him, is to publicly call upon his people to stop the confrontation. Though he has promised us repeatedly that he would take such a step, he has ignored his many opportunities to do so.

Moreover, the current Palestinian initiative represents a blatant attempt to obscure their strategic choice, and as such, the Security Council must not be a party to it. The United Nations cannot be called upon to put out fires on behalf of the same party that has kindled the flames. Such a precedent would be disastrous since it would effectively send a message to the Palestinians — not to mention every other aggrieved people of the world — that violence and aggression will lead to sympathy and international protection.

The Council must also recognize that sending United Nations personnel to the territories while the intifada continues has the potential to actually escalate the violence and further destabilize the region. The Palestinians have, at least for the time being, elected to pursue the path of confrontation as a means to achieve their political goals. An international presence would be interpreted as sanctioning this strategy, and would therefore solidify the Palestinians' refusal to put down their weapons, negotiate with Israel and reach a compromise agreement. And, as I have already mentioned, the mere presence of international observers would, as has occurred in the past with regard to the international media, lead the Palestinians to provoke further confrontations. Indeed, the presence of United Nations personnel would create a significant incentive for the Palestinians to continue the violent struggle. More significantly, it would not succeed in ending the violence, since observers are unable to stop terrorism.

Thus, peace and security would not be enhanced by an international force. A peace agreement would not be brought closer; it would be moved farther away. The Security Council, as the body charged with maintaining international peace and security, would be highly inspired if it would refrain from any action that would undermine this objective. If the international community wishes to see a return to dialogue and negotiation and the ultimate realization of the legitimate aspirations and needs of both parties through a peaceful process, it must insist that the Palestinians stop the violence, which they have initiated, and refrain from actions that may be construed as endorsing violence. Palestinians and Israelis working together: this is the only way to end the spiral of violence and move towards a more peaceful future.

It is also worth reminding the Council that there is already an international delegation that will be arriving in the region next week. The Mitchell commission, with which the Government of Israel has expressed its willingness to cooperate fully, will report to the President of the United States and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the nature and causes of the current violence.

Contrary to allegations and gross mistranslations and misrepresentations of Israel's policies in the face of continuous terrorist threats, our armed forces are not seeking to suffocate the Palestinian people. As Minister Peres said, we seek the advancement and prosperity of the Palestinian people and are willing to work harder towards that goal together with other nations of the world. The present security situation in Israel, however, is real and dangerous. Just this week, police sappers thwarted a car-bomb attack outside the town of Beit Shemesh. In recent weeks we have seen terrorist bombings in Netanya, Jerusalem and the Mei-Ami junction. As far as I understand, at least Netanya and the Mei-Ami junction are not places where illegal

settlements are located in Israel. I say this because there has been an attempt by my Palestinian colleague to plant some confusion about the terrorist activities that occur in Israel itself, not in the territories.

We have experienced abductions and murders. Our citizens are being shot and killed as they drive to and from their homes, including inside of Israel, not only in the territories. This has become a daily aspect of life in Israel that cannot be tolerated by any Israeli Government. It is completely wrong and irresponsible to portray Israel's response to this constantly looming threat as a punitive action taken against the Palestinian people.

Israel has never, and will never, initiate conflict with the Palestinians. They are our neighbours and our partners in peace. A concerted effort on the part of the Palestinian leadership to control violence and terror would enable Israel to ease restrictions in the territories and work again, as we have in the past, to improve the quality of our coexistence. It is the encouragement of confrontation, and the lack of will to bring it to an end, that have brought needless hardships to the civilian population.

It cannot be emphasized enough: peace and violence are mutually exclusive; you must abandon one in order to get the other. What is needed from the Security Council is not intervention, but support for the parties and their bilateral efforts to achieve peace. The Security Council must encourage all relevant parties to be careful with their words, to refrain from language that will incite.

I would urge Council members to consider, above all else, whether an international presence will truly advance our common goal of peace and reconciliation. I believe that the deployment of such a force — and I stress this — while the intifada is still being employed as a strategic tool for political gain would, rather than bringing calm and quiet, be a recipe for long-term instability in the region.

I wish to conclude by calling out in peace to the Palestinian people on behalf of the Government and people of Israel. Let us strive to rejuvenate the spirit embodied in the letters of mutual recognition, broaden the channels of communication and enhance the sense of goodwill and brotherhood between our two peoples. Let us join together in creating an environment of peace and coexistence that will serve as a model for the entire region. Our hand is extended, our leadership is willing and our people are eager.

The President: I thank the representative of Israel for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the United Arab Emirates, whom I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, allow me first, on behalf of the Arab Group, over which I have the honour to preside, to extend to you our congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. We are confident that your expertise and thorough knowledge of international relations will greatly contribute to the Council's role in maintaining international peace and security. On this occasion, I would not fail to extend our appreciation to His Excellency the Permanent Representative of brotherly Tunisia for his successful presidency of the Council last month and for the positive results that have been achieved.

The Security Council is meeting today to discuss the situation and serious developments on the Palestinian scene, particularly in light of the new Israeli Government's continuation of its policies of systematic economic siege, the destruction of human, social and economic infrastructure and its practices of terrorism and ethnic cleansing against the Palestinian people, in addition to its rejection of cooperation with the Mitchell fact-finding mission on aggression against the Palestinian people, one of the most horrendous acts of aggression in the history of humankind, particularly with regard to human rights.

Security Council resolution 1322 (2000) and the resolutions of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, as well as resolutions adopted by human rights and other related bodies, have all requested the Israeli Government as the occupying power to cease immediately all practices of deliberate killing, in particular of women and children, and to cease its bombardment of and aggression against unarmed Palestinian people and the strict closure of Palestinian cities and villages. However, since Sharon's assumption of the present Government, he has exposed his real intentions and designs, which are more aggressive towards the Palestinians and Arabs and which could be considered an extension of his historic

criminal policies. One example of this was the massacre at Sabra and Chatila in 1982, when hundreds of unarmed women and children fell victim.

Mr. Sharon's Deputy and Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, committed a similar criminal act, witnessed by the entire world, against the inhabitants of Qana in southern Lebanon. Even United Nations forces in Lebanon were not spared by that act of aggression.

Today the Palestinian people face the same systematic pattern of terror and aggression. Since December, Israeli military forces have been implementing a serious design of deliberate killing, siege and closure of Palestinian villages and cities. They are preventing access to food supplies and medicines, in addition to other necessary humanitarian needs, and are severing communications with all Palestinian areas by establishing checkpoints, military and otherwise, around Palestinian villages and cities in order to partition the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and to transform them into 60 cantons very similar to collective detention centres. This is a most horrendous act and a violation of human rights. Furthermore, they continue to implement unprecedented policies aimed at destroying the human, social and economic infrastructures of the Palestinian people, coupled with the withholding of financial entitlements to the Palestinian Authority that are measured in millions of dollars.

The United Arab Emirates, on behalf of the Arab Group, expresses its strong condemnation and grave concern regarding this serious military escalation by Israel — aggression that has resulted in the death of 400 innocent Palestinians, particularly women and children, in addition to the injury and crippling of thousands of other innocent Palestinian inhabitants — and considers the Al-Aksa intifada a reflection of Palestinian desperation and frustration and one of the simplest means of self-defence against the Israeli war machine and the heavily armed settlers who possess internationally prohibited weapons that they use against the Palestinian people, who can only defend themselves, their sons and their rights, by throwing stones at their killers in the Israeli army.

We are confident and fully convinced that the situation would not have deteriorated to such a serious stage had the Security Council responded by adopting the draft resolution submitted by the Non-Aligned caucus last December calling for the formation of an international observer force to protect the Palestinian people from all these violations and crimes committed by Israel against it.

The Arab Group hopes that today's Council meeting will result in the adoption of immediate and urgent measures that would reflect the Council's responsibility in the maintenance of international peace and security. Such measures should include, first, bringing the highest degree of pressure to bear on the Israeli Government to force it to immediately cease its wanton aggression against the Palestinian people and to lift its siege of their cities and villages and to allow access to humanitarian assistance — financial, relief, and otherwise — without any further delay; secondly, securing the adoption by the Security Council of the draft resolution that was submitted to it last December calling for the formation of an international observer force to provide protection to the Palestinian people; and thirdly, proceeding to provide urgent financial, economic and humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, the Arab Group would like once again to reiterate its full support of and solidarity with the Palestinian people and its National Authority in their continued search to realize their legitimate rights to establish their own independent State, with Al-Quds as its capital. The Arab Group would also like to reaffirm its determination to continue the march towards a just and comprehensive peace based on resolutions of the international legitimacy, particularly resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace, as well as towards the implementation of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) on the return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland, Palestine.

The Arab Group would also like to request the Israeli side to strictly adhere to its commitments as well as to political and legal undertakings stipulated in the agreements it has concluded with the Palestinian side, in particular those related to the removal of settlements and to putting an end to the occupation of all Arab and Palestinian territories that have been occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds al-Sharif and the Syrian Golan, and to complete its withdrawal from the occupied Lebanese territories, and to remove all weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, in order to promote confidence-building

measures leading to the realization of peace, stability and security in the region.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Arab Emirates for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Ben Mustafa (Tunisia) *(spoke in Arabic)*: May I first of all thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this urgent meeting of the Council in an immediate response to the request made by the Palestinian side, supported by the Arab Group and the Non-Aligned Movement, to consider the dangerous situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Today, it is clear that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories has been one of unprecedented seriousness for years. As is well known, the situation in the field, in terms of its negative characteristics of violence — Israeli violence — which has been ongoing since last fall and is stifling the Palestinian people and targeting it in all its sectors. This violence manifests itself in many forms and in many ways.

First, it is military violence. Israel is making use of the most powerful, modern, lethal and destructive weapons. The Israeli forces, of course, are making use of such weapons in a framework of an imbalance of forces compared to the Palestinians, who limit themselves to stones. Would it suffice to say that the force exerted by Israel against the Palestinians is excessive and disproportionate? The least that could be said is that this Israeli violence has up till now led to hundreds of Palestinian casualties — dead and wounded.

The second manifestation of Israeli violence against the Palestinian people is the economic blockade consisting of besieging Palestinian villages and cities by digging trenches around them, surrounding them with military forces and tanks in order to isolate them and restrict the movement of their inhabitants, and finally, starving the overwhelming majority of the Palestinian population.

While the world was waiting to hear something new from the present Israeli Coalition Government that would provide us with some hope regarding positive new developments, this new Government has begun a policy of escalation and major intensification. It is implementing a military plan designed to dismember and fragment Gaza and the West Bank into several cantons thus facilitating the isolation of cities and villages and ultimately blockading them. This policy aims at tightening the economic vice against the Palestinian people and making its destitution even worse by undermining its economic and social infrastructure, which is already all too fragile.

This is a deliberate, orchestrated, calculated policy. Each of these elements shows that there is an objective behind each of them, an objective aimed at bringing the Palestinian people to its knees, at subjecting it and forcing it to make concessions that were not mentioned during the negotiations over the last years.

We read and hear all the pretexts put forward by Israel to justify this dual repression of extraordinary brutality against the Palestinian people. Yesterday, we heard the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel justify that policy for Israeli security considerations. He told us that this was aimed at coping with extremism and terrorism. This is an attempt obviously designed to pass off Israel as the victim and to place it on the defensive.

Here, I would like to say two basic things regarding the situation. First, with regard to the imbalance of power in Israel's favour, there is absolutely no link between the military brutality and the economic problems that Israel is causing for Palestinians, on the one hand, and Israeli security on the other. As we said yesterday, the tight siege of Palestinian cities and towns, a form of collective punishment against the Palestinian people, cannot, in fact, deter anyone who wants to set off a bomb. Those measures are totally unacceptable in today's world.

Secondly, with regard to this open debate on the serious situation in the occupied territories, there is a need to put things in their proper context. What is the problem? The problem is essentially one of the decades-long Israeli colonization of the Palestinian territories. That colonization and occupation is accompanied by a usurpation of the national rights of the Palestinian people, to their land and property, to a decent life of dignity and self-determination; in addition, this is accompanied by ongoing brutality and repression. This is the basic problem: the Israeli occupation is the underlying cause of the existing imbalance and of all the acts of violence and bloody confrontation that we are seeing in the occupied territories.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, when colonization has disappeared in an era of freedom and human rights, the Palestinian people continue to suffer under Israeli occupation and to have their rights trampled. Israel has for decades flouted all the resolutions of the international community, including resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which reaffirm that occupied Palestinian territories should be restored to Palestinians. The same holds true for the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and other agreements, signed between the two parties. This is the fundamental issue. When this problem disappears, then violence and conflict will disappear from the occupied territories. This is a situation that must be changed radically if we are finally to create peace and launch the energetic actions required to implement a future for the peoples of the region.

The Palestinian side has fulfilled all the obligations and commitments it undertook since the beginning of the peace process in Madrid and Oslo. The Palestinian side has cooperated politically and security-wise with the Israeli side in an unprecedented manner. It should not be forgotten that the Palestinians have made preliminary concessions and have agreed to accept only 22 per cent of the area of Palestine at the time of the Mandate. This is important. What does Israel expect? Does Israel expect even less land to be given? The peace process that began in Madrid — a process that my country has supported and in which it has participated — remains the fundamental and ideal framework to advance the peace process in the Middle East, above all between Palestine and Israel.

The Palestinian side, as well as the Arab countries, have always been committed to peace as a strategic option. We are making every effort to achieve that peace. We are demonstrating good intentions and all the necessary political will. But, like all peoples of the world, the Palestinian side cannot accept the renunciation of its fundamental and legitimate rights. Those inalienable national rights include, above all, the right of Palestinians to self-determination and to establish their own independent State with Jerusalem as its capital. In addition, they include the rights of Palestinians reaffirmed by international resolutions, in addition to the principle of land for peace. Those resolutions represent the legal and moral authority for any just, lasting and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East.

I must therefore say in all sincerity — and here I turn to the Israelis — that systematically procrastinating and side-stepping all the resolutions, understandings and agreements as a matter of policy will not achieve peace or serve the cause of peace; nor will it help us to make progress. Genuine and lasting peace cannot be made by one party alone. Consensus is therefore necessary. Israel is called upon today to demonstrate its determination by agreeing on peace with the Palestinian side and by demonstrating the necessary political will to achieve that peace. This requires the return of the two parties to the negotiating table. The Palestinian party wants to see a return to the negotiating table from the point where the negotiations stopped with the former Israeli Government. International custom requires that States remain bound by agreements concluded by previous Governments. Any kind of peace between Israel and Palestine must be a continuous one; otherwise there will be an indefinite continuation of pointless and senseless action in a vacuum.

Yesterday we heard the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel reject the idea of international protection for the Palestinian people. He disputed the legitimacy of sending an international observer mission to the field. He even refused to have those observers armed or even equipped with cameras. Such a mission, in his view, could pose a threat to civilians or risk an escalation of the situation. In all sincerity, we do not understand that logic. We do not understand how a camera could be more of an incitement to violence than a gun. This is what we do not understand.

We do feel that yesterday's meetings with the Israeli Minister for Foreign Affairs and with the Permanent Observer of Palestine clearly showed us that the idea of sending international observers will receive general support. I think that it is time for the Council, within the framework of its role in following the situation in the region — an integral part of its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security — to tackle the issue seriously and to study all ways and means to respond to the call for observers.

I think that it is false to say that such a mission would internationalize the situation. In fact, the situation has naturally been an international one since the Organization was established. It is international resolutions — whether resolution 242 (1967), 338 (1973) or any other — that represent the legal and

moral authority in the occupied territories. The situation there is so unbalanced that it could threaten international peace and security. A bilateral process can be continued only if it is part of a multilateral process that can provide full backing for the peace process. Anything less will face us with disastrous consequences in the region and in the world as a whole.

Finally, I wish to say that Tunisia vigorously supports the request made here in the Council by Chairman Arafat some time ago to re-establish the confidence that is indispensable for a continuation of the peace process from the point where it stopped. That request is reasonable, has the backing of the Arab Group and meets the demands of all parties, including Israel.

The President: There are a number of speakers remaining on my list. In view of the lateness of the hour, and with the concurrence of the members of the Council, I intend to suspend the meeting now.

The meeting was suspended at 1.20 p.m.